

## Komorebi by larite

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**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Florence "Flo" (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Male Character(s), Steve Harrington, Will Byers

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**Summary:**

- You're fucking wasted, Hargrove.

Steve thinks that he isn't even surprised. Deep down, he knew that somehow, someday he would have to face this person again. Unfortunately, middle of yet another supernatural convention was not Steve's vision of their next meeting.

- Pretty boy? – Billy's slurred words escape his mouth.

Steve wishes for the ground to break and swallow him.

# 1. Chateau

## Author's Note:

Komorebi (n.) (origin: Japanese) - sunlight filtering through the trees.

Hi guys! I haven't published something in a while, not to mention that I've never published work in English. Billy and Steve made me do it. I am crazy about their relationship. They gave me the inspiration to break my writer's block and I'm so glad about it. Writing is something that I cherish the most. I can live a thousand of lives because of it.

This story will mostly tell us more about Steve and his character. Steve is a bit lost in this. He fights his demons using sarcasm and ignorance as a defense mechanism. Billy is lost too and maybe that's why they click so easily. Plus, there is another monster in the Hawkins. Who would expect that, huh?

Enjoy the story. Leave a comment if you liked it. Tell me everything you want. Give me your tumblr's addresses. When you spot a mistake, please inform me.

Important! These characters don't belong to me.  
Important 2! If you would like to be a beta for this work, please write a comment. I feel like I really need one. I would be forever grateful.

- You're fucking wasted, Hargrove.

Steve thinks that he isn't even surprised. Deep down, he knew that somehow, someday he would have to face this person again. Unfortunately, middle of yet another supernatural convention was not Steve's vision of their next meeting.

- Pretty boy? – Billy's slurred words escape his mouth.

Steve wishes for the ground to break and swallow him. Right now. He grips bat tighter in his hands. It had to be his turn for the watch in the woods. Luck is always on the other side of the globe chasing rabbits when it comes to Steve.

- Get up, dipshit. I don't have all night for your drunken antics.

Hargrove laughs. His laugh is deep and taunting. Steve thinks he is going to strangle him. He was so good at avoiding this piece of shit. So good. In school, he hung out only with Nancy and Jonathan. At basketball practice, he kept his distance and he was first to leave the court and locker room. Then, he picked up Dustin and Lucas from the AV club, avoiding even looking at the blue Camaro.

And here he is today. Four months after their fight, he finds Billy Hargrove in the woods, in the middle of the night. Wasted, alone and with a bruised face.

Hell. Steve is living in hell.

- Hargrove, it's fucking freezing. Get. Up.

- It got pretty hot when you came here – Billy's smile is almost predatory.

Steve thinks Billy's smile is stupid. Irritating. Completely, utterly idiotic.

- How did you end up here? – Steve asks, trying to come up with a plan how to transport bulky, tall and apparently almost frozen to death asshole from the middle of the fucking nowhere. – Come up, dumbass. I need some cooperation from your side.

Billy grunts something under his nose. Steve hopes, just hopes, that he won't end with vomit on his shoes. Steve puts his hands under Billy's armpits and tries to haul him up. He thanks himself for all the heavy-lifting that he began to do after fighting with monsters. He wants to pat himself on the shoulder but, unfortunately, his hands are occupied with the drunk mess.

- Can you stand? – Steve asks and he hears small 'yeah' in return.

So they may be getting somewhere after all.

- Can you walk? – Steve tries to get a better grip on Billy's waist. – Shitface? Can you walk, asshole?

- Fuck off.

Steve thinks about dropping him here and leaving. He is so fed up with all of this. Monsters would be probably less problematic right now. Less annoying, for sure.

- Hargrove. You better start fucking walking – Steve grits his teeth.

Billy is completely wasted. He tries to say something when they start walking towards Steve's car but it all comes out slurred and wrong. His face is a complete mess. There are bruises and cuts all over it. He looks almost as bad as Steve when Billy beat the living shit out of him at the Byers house. His shirt is ripped open and Steve wonders if he would find bruises there as well. But it's cold and dark, so he pushes this thought out of his mind and focuses on walking.

He wants to kill himself for parking so far. Or for checking wider area than it was necessary. Or for volunteering to go out for a supernatural watch on Friday night. Or for being such a dumb shit and rescuing Hargrove's sorry ass. He can't decide.

After half an hour of dragging almost unconscious Billy through Hawkins woods, Steve sees his beautiful car. Relief washes over him. He walks with Billy for another few minutes in bliss.

- Ok, hold on – he supports Hargrove with one hand and looks for his keys in the pocket of his denim jacket.

He has to hold a torch in his mouth. If something decided to attack them, they would be in deep shit right now. He fishes keys out of his pocket and opens up the car. He throws Hargrove on the passenger seat – he would not be careful with him, beaten up or not – and closes the door. He goes to his trunk, opens it and puts his bat carefully under a thick layer of blankets. He closes the trunk with a loud noise. He gets in the driver's seat and puts seatbelts on. He throws the radio in the back seat. He looks on Hargrove. He is

apparently asleep. Steve puts his seatbelts on. He closes all of the car doors so no one from the outside would get inside. Then, Steve lets out a breath.

He looks at Billy. He watches his face, searching for any sight of serious injuries. Hargrove only has some bruises and light cuts. He thinks. Then he looks away. And thinks more.

He can drive to Hargrove's house. On the other hand, he heard things. Max is not the most talkative person in the world but she is not the most careful one either. Sometimes, she slips something about her family that her young mouth thinks is harmless. Insignificant. Steve may be stupid, but he is getting better at reading between the lines. Hargrove's family is definitely not a great, functional group of people. Hargrove's father may or may not be the reason for it. Steve tries not to pry much. If Max is not in danger, it's not his battle to fight.

He can call Hopper but it would only get him in trouble. He already told him on the radio an hour ago that he was done with the watch. It was a lie because Steve had a night to kill and checking few more spots around the woods felt like a necessity. Hopper would be pissed about it. He would recite whole 'putting yourself in danger' tirade along with 'go home now, kid or I will find you and kill you' verse. Steve just wanted him off his back. Be careful what you wish for, Steve thinks.

The rest is probably asleep at this point. He doesn't even consider waking up dipshits. Maybe Nancy and Jonathan would be able to... Friday night. Date night. Damn it. Even if there was a herd of demodogs circling the car, he wouldn't dare to call them on the date night. His heart is still mending, thank you very much.

He sighs and puts the key in the ignition. He starts the car. His parents are away. He doesn't even know why he has an internal debate about it.

Billy Hargrove is wasted and unconscious. Steve is good human being. He will drive them to his house - a fucking lonely piece of bricks, if you ask him - put Billy in a guest room and go to his bedroom. He will wake up in the morning, sheets in the guest room

will be tangled, bed empty and Steve conscious safe and sound.

Steve has to resist wanting to pat himself on the shoulder again. He is not a child, for fuck sake.

Driving home is his favorite part of the supernatural watch. He always drives slowly. When the weather is warm, he rolls down windows and lits up a cigarette. It's a bad habit, picked up after few nightmares, that left him feeling terrified and exhausted to the bone. It has its good sides. He heard girls saying that he is sex on the stick with the cigarette. He is not going to deny them the pleasure of seeing him like that. He often rides around the town, checking dipshits homes - Dustin is always up all night on weekends, his room lights dim - and then he drives some more. On good nights til his eyelids are heavy and vision blurry, on bad ones til his gas is running low.

Tonight apparently, he has a house guest, so his drive is short. He pulls up in his driveway, kills the engine and looks through the front window.

Well, he could always find a Mind Flyer or another monster in those woods, so, after all, drunk Billy Hargrove is a bit of relief. If you want an optimistic look at the situation. Lately, Steve is becoming good at having a positive attitude. Or faking it. Whatever.

He goes up and circles the car. He opens the passenger door.

God damn it, he would kill for the Mind Flyer right now.

- Hargrove, move - Steve nudges Billy's arm.

Hard. It doesn't work. Steve practically hits Billy in his bulky limb. Billy opens his eyes slowly. His sight is unfocused, nose wrinkled. His breath almost makes Steve drunk.

- Get your ass up, prick.

Steve hauls Billy out of his car and closes the door with his leg. He walks towards the front of his dark home. He slings Hargrove on his right arm and digs out the keys. He opens the door and doesn't stop walking until Hargrove is put on the bed in guest room. Then he

comes down, checks locks twice, gets some water and a plastic bowl. He puts the bowl beside the bed, water on the night table and finally breaths.

When he lays in his bed hour later, after cleaning the mess they made with their dirty shoes, looking intently on the Billy Hargrove in the guest bed and smoking two cigarettes on the balcony, he is still conflicted. His clock is on 2:30 AM and he knows his sleep probably went to look out for his luck. He thinks some more. Eventually, he reaches to the drawer and puts out ashtray, a pack of cigarettes and lighter. He lights one cigarette and drags on. He keeps the smoke inside his lungs for a while and lets it out slowly. He puts his left hand behind his head. He drags on again. And again.

He thinks. He does that a lot lately. He is more in his head that he is present with others. Dustin is pissed about it (not listening, Stevie boy, again may I add). Nancy says it's wrong to keep everything inside. Jonathan doesn't exactly say anything. He has this look that makes Steve uncomfortable. Steve laughs at the memory of Jonathan's look. It's pretty hilarious. Pretty wrong too, if you ask him. Jonathan doesn't know him. Few monsters and one girlfriend are not exactly things to bond over. At least, not in Steve's point of view.

Steve drags on the cigarette again.

Billy fucking Hargrove. Steve would snort but he is way too mature for that. Only now, the stupidity of his decision is becoming more and more visible to him. He sighs. It's not like he's forgiven the man. He hasn't. But that night was eventful to say at least. When he compared being chased by monsters to fighting with Billy, he would choose the latter every time. His face healed in two weeks. His ribs hurt like hell, but a month later he was back on the basketball field. He doesn't dwell on this fight. Hargrove lost control. Steve was the closest one. Shit happened. It doesn't make it right, but Steve is done with being hateful about it.

But monsters?

They were a different thing. Whole other fucking dimension. Whenever he thinks about that night he doesn't see Billy's maniacal

face. He looks in the eyes of a row of teeth. His ears are full of horrifying screeching. Nightmares feel like old buddies now. Sometimes he almost expects them to come. He goes to sleep aware that it will be another restless night. Steve drives on times like this. Smokes cigarette after cigarette, his mixtapes playing softly in the background. He looks for something that would ground him. Soothe him. He always comes back empty-handed.

Steve crushes the last cigarette in the ashtray and puts it back in the drawer. He adjusts his pillows and closes his eyes. He hums some melody, hoping it would help him fall asleep.

Billy Hargrove might've done monstrous things, but Steve's seen worse.



## 2. Four

### Notes for the Chapter:

Back at it again with a new chapter!

Hi! How are you? Feeling good? I'm coming today with a brand new chapter and oh boy, I hope you will like it!

As usual, leave a comment or kudos for me if you think it's worth it.

This is my tumblr, you can ask questions there as well (my tumblr is a work in progress but still):  
steveisfedupwithyourshit !

Love you!

Steve decides that he didn't think through his whole 'saving lost child' adventure. When he wakes up and Billy's face is the first thing he sees, he comes to the conclusion that his brain had to be broken at the time. There is no other explanation.

- Are you enjoying yourself, asshole?

The lost child is back to being found dipshit. Steve sighs and rubs his eyes. It's too early for this shit. He didn't even drink his first coffee for fuck sake.

- Yes – he says stupidly.

Well, he slept three hours. And, to be honest, he is truly enjoying himself at the moment.

- Listen to me, fuckhead. We didn't...

- The door key is in the green bowl next to the mirror. Just go and see yourself out.

Steve doesn't give a shit about Billy Hargrove. He jawns. He gets up from the bed and reaches for a cigarette from the drawer. He lights it

quickly and drags on it. Better.

Billy is still standing in his bedroom. He has his dirty shoes on. His black, thick jacket – who knew he owned one – is thrown over his shoulder. Billy's blue jeans are tight as always but his shirt is buttoned almost all the way up to his long neck. He sticks out like a sore thumb. Steve thinks he looks hilarious.

- Do I need to lead you to the front door? – Steve snorts.

He's enjoying this a little too much. Maybe that's why, seconds after he asked his question, his back is painfully colliding with the wall.

- What the hell are you playing at, Harrington? – Billy snickers.

- You owe me a cigarette, fuckhead.

Steve comes to a realization that he must have a serious death wish. Billy is gripping his throat tight with his hand. However, Steve is not afraid. The grip is only supposed to make him feel uncomfortable and threatened. Steve looks properly at Billy's face. He has a black eye and bruised jaw. There are few cuts on the right side of his face. Hargrove's hair is dirty and Steve sees dried blood on few strings of blond locks. Billy is observing Steve with pure fury in his eyes. Steve decides to put his hands on Hargrove's wrist.

Billy stills.

- I found you wasted in the woods. You shouldn't be there. I definitely shouldn't be there either. So, let's pretend it's never happened. What do you say, amigo?

Billy's grip on Steve's neck is tightening. He seems conflicted. Still angry as fuck though.

- What's in it for you, Harrington? I'm not going to believe in your good intentions.

Steve is getting pissed off. When an ungrateful piece of shit.

- I did some good fucking deed. – Steve tries to put down Billy's hands. - Another brick to my home up there in heaven. The fuck do

you want Billy? I offer you a good deal. Take it and leave.

- What do I want? – Billy's face is darkening. – What do I want, pretty boy?

Steve blinks. He can tell that his genius plan isn't working out. He almost feels how it's crumbling right under his nose. Billy sees his discomfort. His smile is getting bigger and bigger. His all teeth are showing right now. There is glee in his eye that Steve only saw that night at the Byers place. It is setting Steve's skin on fire. His breaths are shorter now. His lips parted and dry.

- Tell me, Harrington. – Billy's legs are pressed closely against Steve's.  
- Where my sister disappears every once in a while? Huh, amigo?

Steve gulps. Shit. He is not prepared to have this conversation with Billy Hargrove.

- Maybe, just maybe – Billy is pretending to wonder for a little bit. – You can tell me why my car looked like he was dragged through hell after that night?  
Damn Steve's life, honestly.

- Or, I don't know, what the hell was going on at this freak house? – Billy observes him intently.

Steve's good humor disappears completely. He has to bite his tongue hard. His eyes are set on Billy's but his mind is away, back on the ground of Byers living room. He remembers Billy's predatory smile. How Steve's vision started to blurry when Billy landed another punch to his face. How he couldn't breathe because his mouth was full of blood. When he tastes something metallic on his tongue, he lowers his gaze abruptly. Hargrove's collarbones seem safer.

- Just – he starts, his voice tense. – Go, Hargrove.

Billy's grip tightens a little more but after few seconds Steve is free. Billy takes a few steps back. He is standing next to the bedroom door. Steve is looking at the carpet. His lost cigarette burned a hole in it. He makes a mental note to find and replace it with an old one that is stored in the attic.

- This conversation is not over, Harrington – Billy says.

His voice is quiet but set. Steve can almost feel his determination.

He hears Billy's footsteps. After few seconds front door is closing with a loud bang.

Steve runs to the bathroom and vomits.

Then, he washes his teeth and face. He puts on an old long sleeve and grey sweatpants. He grabs sunglasses and pack of cigarettes. He locks the front door and spends a whole day sitting by the pool.

He watches how the water flows and wonders why the world wouldn't give him a break.

-

When Monday comes, the weekend is nothing but a hazy memory for Steve. He drives to school and says the appropriate amount of 'yes' and 'sure' to Nancy and Jonathan. He even asks them about their date and gets a recommendation for a new diner one town over.

Well, maybe he would ask his dramatic brain to come with him on a date. That would be fun for sure.

Billy Hargrove and his hovering presence get on Steve's nerves. He chooses extreme ignorance because, in Steve's messed up mind, it's the best way to deal with problems. To make his tactic even more effective, he pushes Hargrove hard whenever he gets too close to Steve at practice. If he pats himself on the shoulder for that in his car, nobody is there to judge him.

After school and practice, he drives to the sheriff office. Hopper is sitting in his chair with a sad face and a banana in his hand. Steve laughs and closes the door.

- Stop with the laughing, son – Jim warns him and rubs his eyes.

Steve laughs even more. He shoots a wink at the sheriff who seems to be fed up with his shit already.

- Not my fault, Hop. You're acting like a henpecked husband.

Hopper looks at him with disbelief. Steve smiles and sees glee of amusement in sheriff's eyes.

- If acting like this makes her leave me in peace, I will be the best henpecked husband this world saw – Hopper winks at him.

Steve relaxes a bit in a chair. Hopper looks at him and sighs.

- How's El? – Steve asks because he came here for a reason.

Two, actually. One of them was to make fun of Jim Hopper, the best henpecked sheriff in the United States.

- She's good, Steve. No nightmares throughout the weekend.

Steve nods. This is good news. They started to go on supernatural watches because of El's dreams. The thought that they may no longer happen, gives him enormous relief.

- Steve...

Steve looks at the sheriff. Hopper seems to be conflicted about something. He lights a cigarette and drags on it.

- There is another thing... – Jim hesitates for a minute. – That I have to tell you.

Steve gulps. Fuck. He locks his eyes with Jim. The sheriff seems to be nervous. He drums his fingers on a desk.

- This stays between us. Of course, El knows – Jim sighs. – But other than that, you will not say a word about it to anyone.

- Just say it, Hop.

Hopper is studying him for a minute. Then he reaches out for his keys and opens up a drawer. He puts out some files and throws them in

Steve's direction. When Steve wants to open them, Jim stops him.

- Just so you know, kid – Jim says. – I'm sorry to put you in a situation like this. I have no other option. If it's too much, you don't have to stay.

Steve starts to panic. Fuck, he will need to go back in those fucking tunnels again, he can feel it in his bones. What a fuckup he must've been in the previous lives to deserve such horrific one.

Still, Steve knows that he will help Hopper, no matter what things he will read and see in these files. During last few months, Jim started to grow on him. He feels inspired by the man. By his courage. Steve wants to be this brave someday.

He opens the files. There is a note about two missing people from the town on the other side of the woods. Steve reads it carefully. Apparently, they were a couple who decided to go out in the woods at night for a little game.

Steve doesn't see anything arousing with a dark fucking forest and monsters in the corners, but maybe he is just different.

There are some interrogation notes from close family and friends. Photos of them. They seem like a normal, happy couple. They have been gone for two weeks now, Steve calculates looking at the date on the note. Realization dawns on him after few seconds.

- They went missing on the night El started to have nightmares – Steve looks at Hopper.

Jim nods his head. He gestures for Steve to keep reading.

There is a bunch of papers that are not relevant. Steve knows by now that law insists on police departments and sheriff offices to do a bunch of paperwork that nobody actually ever reads. He scans through the pages and reaches for another file. He opens it quickly and immediately drops it on the desk.

- What the fuck, Hop? – Steve hisses.

There are photos. Steve has to grip his chair tightly. Fuck, he is going

to throw up. Hopper takes a file and lays every single photo on the desk.

There is so much blood. It's like somebody poured few liters of it on the forest ground. On the close-ups, Steve can see fragments of a human body. Or, what's left of it. His hands are trembling.

Steve thinks that his turkey sandwich won't be able to stay in his stomach any longer.

- Can you take them away, please? – he asks.

He stands up but his legs are wobbly. Damn, where are those tunnels again? Can he choose running in them for a month over this shit?

Hopper takes photos back and puts them into the file. He rubs his eyes tiredly.

- I know it's a lot.

Steve takes a few breaths. He tries to calm himself down. Jim needs him. He can have his little bitch panic attack at home later. Now he has to focus.

- Tell me what I need to know – he says firmly.

- The blood is still tested – sheriff informs him. – Officially, the case was taken by murder investigation department. The problem lays elsewhere.

Steve looks at Hopper with anticipation. Is he building the tension now? Fucking now?

- El's first nightmare was about that night. She told me that somebody's missing. We didn't even have a call that somebody went missing that night or day after. I thought it was just a bad dream.

Hopper stops and lights another cigarette. Steve helps himself to his own package and soon, Jim's office is full of smoke.

- I told you, it wasn't the visions like she used to have. It was a blurry image with some male voice in the background telling her bits and

pieces.

- Yeah, I remember - Steve nods. – You didn't think it was anything connected with the Upside Down but you wanted to check it out. Better safe than sorry.

- Exactly, kid. We all went out for the watches but found nothing.

Well, Steve found wasted Billy Hargrove but it's not like he's going to say anything about it. It wasn't the highlight of his week.

- Yesterday somebody was walking a dog in the forest and the dog led him to this place – Hopper taps files with photos. – The rest is obvious.

Steve sits down. He tries to think but his thoughts are rushing way too quickly for him to catch up. He supposes that anyone who did that was not a human. On the other hand, El should feel if something supernatural was in town. She always saw or sensed these things.

- It doesn't add up, Hop. – Steve says, trying to sound composed. – El would know if some shit was going down. She knew with Mind Flyer and...

Steve stops when Hopper shakes his head lightly.

- What?

The silence stretches uncomfortably between them. Steve is getting impatient. His arms are crossed, the cigarette dangles from his fingers, long forgotten. His hands are gripping his arms tightly.

- I met up with Owens before you came - Jim admits, looking blankly at his desk. – I told him everything. To my surprise, he was familiar with the situation.

Steve is confused.

- How? – he asks carefully.

- Something similar happened once. A while ago. At the laboratory. Information about it was in the papers Owens got when he started to



manage this place.

Damn. Steve is just... Fuck.

- What was it? – Steve asks because he's done. – How can we fight it? Is it big? How does it...

- It's he, Steve.

Steve looks abruptly at Hopper with disbelief. He? But that would mean...

- He is one of the first kids who was used there as experiments. His name is Four.

### 3. Needed Me

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Man, this chapter is finally up!

I had something completely different in mind for the plot for this part but I think this one works surprisingly well too. The more Billy/Steve interactions the better. At least in my world.

As usual, leave something here if you like it. I appreciate all of you! You are precious.

Take care. You are beautiful. Have a nice week, readers!

Steve will kill Billy Hargrove. It's decided. Steve is going to murder Billy Hargrove and his fucking mullet, and he won't feel bad about it. Ever.

- You've exceptionally sucked at the practice today, Harrington – Billy snickers.

It's March and sun is shining through the clouds. Apparently, it requires a pair of fucking sunglasses on Billy's stupid face to make him look a little bit more of an asshole.

The small voice in the back of his head is telling him that he did too wear sunglasses today, but he shushes it immediately. Even his brain is betraying him today, what a surprise.

Today's AV club is running late – only a couple of minutes, Dustin said, we are on the brink of discovery here – so Steve decided to get out of the car for a quick smoke. He doesn't know what kind of discovery kids were talking about (it's the AV club), but he didn't engage in the conversation with Dustin. He would only get confused and depressed that middle schooler knowledge is much wider than his. He doesn't need that. One thing he didn't consider was that Billy Hargrove would wait for Max. Billy parked right next to him and apparently decided to annoy him.

That's how Steve finds himself in the parking lot, staring at the

school door and praying for kids to come out.

- You usually suck but, man, today you were horrible – Billy says, leaning casually against his Camaro. – I recommend a bit of girl love, you know?

Steve is so done, that he can't even describe it.

- Hargrove, do you ever consider shutting your mouth? – he snaps.

Billy's smile is automatically getting bigger.

- Did I hit a sore point? I'm sorry – he doesn't sound sorry at all. – Are you still pinning over Wheeler? She seems pretty happy with the freak. Sure thing, happier than with you.

Well, Billy Hargrove may be an idiot but he does have a point. Nonetheless, Steve decides that he is way too mature for a fist fight with Billy in the parking lot of kids school.

Billy is still talking – probably more trash about Steve's miserable love life – but Steve withdraws from the conversation. He looks over Billy's head on the trees that grow behind the soccer field. He scans a neighborhood carefully.

He is on the edge these days. It's been two weeks since Hopper told him about the boy. Jim said earlier this week that everything seems to be normal. El's been fine. No nightmares, no creepy male voice in her head and no suspicious visions of supernatural shit. Jim scanned the woods couple of times but found nothing. Steve's done that too but Hopper doesn't have to know that.

- I do have a hope for your reputation, but on the other hand, this whole 'hanging out with middle schoolers'...

Steve just can't sleep. His energy is fucked up. Going back into the woods does nothing to calm him but it's better than sitting in his cold bedroom, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

He trailed the woods for hours yesterday, getting jack shit from it. He checked every spot, thought about every possibility but when the morning came, sunlight was starting to filter through the trees, and

he was sitting in his car with sore legs and few scratches on his face from the branches but nothing more, he was getting angry.

- Do you like old or younger ones? That's what's weird about you, Harrington, I could never tell what you...

He never knew this kind of anger. It is a fury that leaves your mind blank and your only desire is to destroy something. One minute he was clutching his steering wheel and the other he was fleeing out of his car and smashing a tree with his bat. He wanted to scream, so he did just that. His frustrations kicked in like an ocean wave and crushed him. He was nearly suffocating from the rage he felt.

When he got back home that morning, he went straight to the bathroom. He stripped naked and let the warm water from the shower hit his skin. Steve felt exhausted. His hands were burning because he fucked them up during his fury attack. His chest was tight and Steve just wanted to lean onto somebody and cry his eyes out.

Because it wasn't the anger that made Steve lose his mind and control. It was hopelessness, that he felt more and more with every time he came back from the woods with nothing.

- Princess, you won't find your king in these trees. He's standing right here.

Oh, for fuck sake.

- Hargrove, please. Do you hear your...

- What happened to your hands, Harrington? – Billy drags on the cigarette and looks intently at Steve.

Steve raises his eyebrows. Hargrove is paying attention and Steve doesn't like it. At all.

- Why do you care? – Steve asks warily.

Billy shrugs. He has this vicious smirk on his face and Steve can feel that in a minute he will say something that will make Steve's life extremely difficult.

- I got in a fight – Steve throws quickly, hoping Billy will let it go.

He doesn't. Steve clenches his fists.

- A fight, you say? Interesting – Billy licks his lips slowly.

They hear kids coming out of the school. Dustin argues about something with Mike, who sounds like he's done with everything and everybody. Billy doesn't lower his eyes. His smirk is getting on Steve's nerves. He doesn't believe him but Steve doesn't need him to. He just wants him off his back. He is in too much shit already to add to this mess Billy Hargrove.

- You know, Harrington, you could work on your lies – Billy starts, as he comes a little closer to Steve. – They are almost as shit as your play.

Billy shots him a wink and gets in his car.

Steve's knuckles started to bleed. He clenches them even tighter.

-

He can't sleep today. It's no surprise for Steve. He's standing in the doorway that leads into the garden. He is smoking and looking at the calm water in his pool.

He's glad that this is Friday night. He will have all Saturday to lay on the couch in the living room, catch up on sleep, watch Ghost Busters and try to get some homework done.

Steve used to be fond of the night. It'd always been this way. Before Upside Down he liked the freedom that night was giving him. He would go out to the parties, get drunk with his friends and have nothing to worry about. It was exhilarating. During the day he'd had school, homework and other shit to work on but when the sun went down? He was free. He would sneak out of the window when his parents were home. It happened rarely but still. Steve was stupid,

careless kid but it was fine to be one. Then, other things happened. Late nights became reserved for Nancy and their little, romantic meetups. Those nights were good too. He thinks about them with fondness, although there is still a lot of bitterness around the corners.

Now it's just him, his bat and the rest of the world. Steve snorts.

He fucking hates the night.

The day wasn't even better. A few hours earlier he came back from the dinner at the Byers. Steve swallowed his childish pride and showed up with a cake, bought at the local bakery. It's not entirely true that he doesn't like to get together with everyone. Steve loves it, honestly. He adores Joyce and her cooking, stupid jokes made by Hopper and noise of the house that is a home. He likes chasing the kids around or getting educated by Lucas and Dustin on the newest scientific discoveries. Will always shows him his new paintings. He's still a bit shy around him, but Steve doesn't mind. Mike is usually scowling at everyone, but Steve likes how his face lits up whenever Hopper manages to smuggle El to these dinners. Max is lovely too. He teaches her new skateboard tricks and she likes his sense of humor. He doesn't mind Nancy and Jonathan either. They are fair to him. They don't show off their love in front of him – not that he would mine, at least not now, he supposes – and they always include him in the conversation. It's good. He's fine. But today he just wanted to hide in his bed with a bottle of something strong and forget about everything.

Steve sighs. He is getting melodramatic. He has to ask Dustin if this is some sort of middle age crisis, but teenage edition. Steve is fed up with his stupid brain.

The best thing is, Steve thinks with bitterness, that everything, besides this lab boy on the loose, is okay. Great even. His coach is giving him compliments about his game (suck it and choke, Hargrove) and says that he has a good chance for a sports scholarship. Kids are fine and safe. Nancy helps him with his English and Jonathan is less weird around him lately. His parents even called twice this week. Steve thought his mind would flip out because of this unprecedented show of caring on their side.

Everything is fine beside Steve's brain. His stupid, stupid brain who can't shut up. Who fuels Steve with hope for a second and anxiety for days.

Oh, and there is a murderous teenage boy hiding in the woods but Steve is kind of in peace with that fact.

Steve is weird human being, he gives himself that.

The doorbell rings. Steve jumps.

He looks at the clock. It's 2 AM in the morning. He localizes his bat.

Steve feels a kick of adrenaline in his body. He turns around carefully. He doesn't make a noise when he comes up to the couch and gets his hand wrapped around the weapon.

Steve lives in a calm area of the town. Read calm, rich and uppish. His neighbors are polite but they all keep to themselves. He doesn't remember being in any of the houses on his street. They don't like to intrude or to be intruded. It couldn't be them.

Hopper would call him first. He knows Steve's opinion on surprise visits. He wouldn't leave El or take her with him either. It's not him.

Steve's steps behind the front door. He slows down his breaths and tightens his grip on the bat. Steve lifts him above his head, in a position ready to attack if necessary. He swallows quietly and ducks a little to look through the peephole.

Fuck Steve's life.

There is Billy Hargrove standing impatiently in front of his house.

Steve wonders what is wrong with this world. He throws the bat in the corner beside the door – honestly, he couldn't care less - and opens them, feeling an existential crisis creeping on him.

Billy smiles at him wildly. Steve notices that his teeth are bloody and his breath smells like an old brewhouse.

Steve is ready to fight a fucking teenage murderer but when he sees

drunk Billy Hargrove he's just...

Done.

- What the fuck are you doing here, asshole?

Steve doesn't get an answer to his question because, apparently, Billy is in his world. He stumbles into the house and pats Steve's shoulder on the way in.

When Steve shakes himself off the bewilderment, Billy is already sprawled across his couch, his boots laying neatly – Steve notices, because, well, it's weird - besides it.

- I dreamed a whole way here about that bed upstairs, but this will do - Billy slurs as he tries to take off his leather jacket.

Steve is shaking. He starts to wonder for real what bad shit he did in his previous lives because this one is clearly a punishment.

- Hargrove, why are you exactly here?

Billy grumbles something under his breath. His jacket lands on the glass table. Steve watches how he tries to undo his belt and fails. Billy swears and throws himself on the pillows. He curls on the right side of his body and looks hilarious.

Steve's pillows. Steve's spot to lay on the sleepless nights. Steve's fucking house.

- So soft – Steve hears Billy muttering. – Calm.

Oh, Steve thinks. They are on the level of one syllable words now. Great.

Steve comes a little closer to the couch. He nudges Billy.

- Shithead – he starts nicely because Steve is a nice person. – You can't be here. Why are you here?

Billy stirs. He starts to turn over and all that Steve can understand, due to his mumbling and rustling of fabrics, is 'sleep'.



Steve is glad that they both want the same thing but he still doesn't know how Billy Hargrove's sleep is connected with scaring the shit out of Stiles at the horrendous hour in the morning and laying completely wasted on Steve's favorite spot on the couch.

He is opening his mouth again – he is dropping the nice tag now – when he sees them.

Billy manages to turn over after a bit of a hustle and his shirt rolls up. Steve swallows and steps back.

There are bruises all over Billy's ribs. Splashes of yellow, burgundy and purple are painted on the right side of his body. They look horrible. Billy looks horrible. Steve can't bring himself to say anything more. The only thoughts in his mind are calm, sleep and vision of the bruises that must hurt like a bitch when Billy was trying to get to Steve's house. Steve hasn't seen any car parked outside, so he supposes that Hargrove came up here on foot. Whatever his reason was, he was clearly desperate to get through.

Steve sits heavily on the glass table and observes Billy for the longest time.

If the hour later he gets up and wraps his favorite blanket around Billy Hargrove, it's not connected with the anger and hopelessness boiling in his stomach.

He is just being nice.

## 4. Saturday Night

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hi! How are you?

This week was ex-fucking-hausting.

Writing was the only thing that kept me going.

Take care of yourselves, readers. I love you.

I'm going to take a nap now. Or two.

Steve pushes himself up once more with a groan on his lips.

Why is he doing this to himself?

His training has started with running and punching an old bag that Hopper gave him as a 'need to get rid of it' present. Alongside with a bag came 'Crazy Jim', who, in melancholic voice, informed him that he used to be the best at physical training in the academy. He told Steve to call him 'The Master'.

Steve laughed at that and then Jim Hopper kicked his ass in ten seconds. Steve's pride was buried lower than the Upside Down. He decided that he could use a bit of an advice. Unfortunately, he didn't realize that he got himself a personal trainer he never asked for.

Jim trained him personally for a month straight – a horrible time of Steve's life – then he slowed down a bit due to El's problems and job demands.

Steve has ended up liking working out. He prefers to go harsh on himself. It helps him with sleep and anxiety. His brain, surprisingly, shuts up during punching sessions. He likes heavy lifting, running and feeling an accomplishment after a good work out.

He just hates pushups.

According to Jim – The Master, kid – they are essential.

- Your position is wrong. Billy's doing it differently.

Steve's hatred for pushups is squared. He lifts himself up and looks at Max with a deadly expression.

Well, he hopes it's deadly. He's never been particularly good at this one.

- Thank you, Max. I appreciate your unnecessary comment – he bites off, but his playful tone is giving him out.

Max is smirking at him. They heard some crashes inside and loud 'It's the Fireball attack, hide!'. Steve sighs. Max rolls her eyes.

- They are such kids – she says, grabbing her skateboard again and checking the wheels.

She loves her skateboard more than Steve's brain loves anxiety. That says something.

Steve is done with the practice after another round of pushups. His T-shirt is sticky with sweat and his face is running hot. He must look fabulous because once Max lifts her eyes to glance at him, she snorts.

Steve considers throwing her into the pool but he remembers that Billy is coming in an hour to pick her up. Steve doesn't need another conversation with 'pretending to care' jackass.

The kids' campaign was planned to happen at Mike's place. Apparently, Mrs. Wheeler had to hold some kind of meeting at the house – adult stuff, Steve, how am I supposed to know what is it – and today's campaign was in danger of 'not happening, Steve'. Mike Wheeler, being a little shit he is, decided to ask if Steve's home is available for them.

He told kids to come with snacks and be prepared to him not being around due to his overdue homework and training. He didn't need to do that. When it comes to the campaign – it's sacred, Steve – he is not even allowed to be in the same room.

And they showed up with a pack of gums and soda. So much for the snack department.

Max has played once and she swore on her skateboard that she would never – never, ever, never, Steve – do it again. She wanted to hang out nonetheless. She is silent companion beside him, allowing him to get everything done while repairing and oiling her precious board. She somehow knows when Steve is feeling down. Steve admires that about her. Max's there for him. Like a sibling he never had.

Pretty impressive for a middle schooler to be this thoughtful.

Damn, melancholy is so much better than this sappy shit.

- How's Billy by the way? – Steve asks casually because – uh – he knows how Billy is.

Apparently, his couch is Billy's new favorite night destination. Steve's Harrington house – a shelter for the dumbshit.

Max shrugs.

- Still an asshole – she rolls her eyes at Steve's weak 'language, Maxine'.

- Is he acting fine? – he dugs because he cares.

And he has no fucking idea why Billy Hargrove was sleeping on his couch a few days ago.

Ok, not true. He has an idea. Steve can put two and two together. He is not blind.

Well, most of the time Steve can put two and two together.

- Yeah, I guess – Max checks the last wheel and puts her skateboard away. - He hasn't been around much lately. He doesn't give me hard time when he is though. Slow down, mum.

Steve grits his teeth. He shots Max another deadly glare but she only winks at him. Then she gets up and goes back into the house.

An hour later Steve is washed, the vegetables for dinner are cut and his living room is saved from the attack of the Demogorgon.

Thank fucking God.

Guys went back to their homes a few minutes ago – it's 5 PM, Steve, we will bike, calm the fuck (language, dipshit!) down – and Max is waiting for her ride. She helps Steve cleaning up and he comes to a conclusion that she may be his favorite.

He won't tell that Dustin though.

- Do you think El's fine?

Thank God he put that plate on the shelf. Damn, Max knows how to throw someone off-balance. Steve gazes at her. She is playing with the hem of her sweatshirt. She seems to be at ease but he knows better.

- Yeah, she's good, Max. Why are you asking?

- No reason – she says quickly and shots him a weird look.

- Max – he warns her.

He throws a towel over his shoulder and observes Max. After few minutes of stubborn silence on Max's part, Steve gives up.

- Max, please, just tell...

- She's distant. She doesn't talk much. I'm worried.

Steve blinks.

Max is looking at the floor. She appears to be ashamed that she admitted to 'worrying about someone'.

- We have our own canal. 'Girls line' – she says quickly to hide her embarrassment. – We used to talk for hours. She's not there recently. I don't know what happened.

Kids can't know what is going on. There would be nothing to stop them from scouring the whole woods and get themselves hurt. Hopper told El that. She is still adapting to the reality of the world. To feelings, the idea of friends and family. She may be headstrong

but she would never jeopardize them. El wouldn't lie either. The best choice in her little head is to shut her friends out.

If that will keep them safe, El is ready to do that.

Steve feels like a jerk now. He's been so caught up with keeping the party safe that he hadn't thought about their feelings.

- I'm sure everything is ok, Max – Steve says softly.

Max is not convinced. She opens her mouth to say more but the doorbell stops her.

- There is nothing to worry about, trust me – Steve ensures her. - I can drive up to the cabin and check up on her. Ask about it without giving out 'Max is worried' card. What do you think?

Max glances at him and nods sharply.

She grabs her denim jacket and puts it on. Steve opens the front door.

Billy Hargrove is smoking outside. He nods at him and Steve does the same. He acts like his usual self. Steve has his mind on the other track. He can't be bothered to think about their little sleepover.

Or discuss it.

Max goes out of the house with her cute, burgundy backpack on the back and a skateboard in her hand. She pats Steve on the shoulder and steps down to get into the car.

Billy throws Steve a goodbye wink.

Steve couldn't care less.

When the Camaro disappears on the road, Steve sighs and leans against the doorframe.

He knows that the heartbroken expression on Max's face is going to haunt him in his dreams.

He doesn't deserve these kids.

-

He throws another punch.

Another one.

And another one.

His knuckles are already fucked up but Steve doesn't care.

They have nothing on this fucking demon from the woods. Owens picked up all the documentation that was available. It's a bunch of useless papers. They could burn it and lose nothing. Hopper is getting nervous. Steve's sanity is tested daily.

He can't think about school now. Not when there is a murderer on the loose, people go missing and kids are starting to get nervous. He doesn't hand his homework yesterday. Or the day before. He failed his last Algebra test. He punches the bag harder for that. Algebra won't help him put down this motherfucker.

Somebody went missing three days ago. Thomas Franklin. He was a bit older than Steve. Steve remembers him from the coffee shop. He likes to go there sometimes and have a cup of nice coffee. Thomas has worked there for few months.

It isn't anything personal. It just hit close. The other two were from a different town. Thomas was Lucas's neighbor. Kids are terrified. Steve can only play the stupid, dumb Stevie boy because he can't have them running through the woods, trying to catch the bad man.

Not anymore.

So Steve goes out every night for the watch. He rummages through the woods. Sometimes he does it with Hopper. Sometimes he fishes out a gun from his father closet and searches the area by himself. After school, he goes to the Sheriff's Office and reads every piece of the papers that he finds potentially useful. It's called 'training' in Flo's notebook. He has to keep appearances. They can't suspect anything.

Steve plays good, rich boy who found out that his destination is to become a cop. He shoots smiles, tries to keep up with his basketball

performance and drives kids to school and arcade. Then, he's in the woods or at the cabin or at the Sheriff's Department trying to get some answers. The answers never come.

He can't fucking breathe.

Maybe that's why – because of this rage boiling in his veins and hazing his senses – he doesn't hear the doorbell ringing or Billy Hargrove coming down to his basement.

He jerks when he feels a light touch on his shoulder. He turns around and sees Billy. Steve is looking at him blankly. He wants to be confused. Steve wants to ask what the hell Billy is doing here.

He doesn't have to.

One look is enough for Steve to know the reason. The blood on Billy's lips and forehead is still fresh.

- Lock the front door. The blanket is on the couch – Steve says, his focus already returning to the punching bag.

He wants to be alone. Steve needs to be alone. He can't trust himself right now. He feels like he would burst any minute now.

After a moment of silence, Steve turns around again. Billy is still standing in the same spot that before.

- Are you deaf? – Steve comes a bit closer to him.

The punch catches Steve off guard. He feels blossoming pain in his left cheek and stumbles a bit backward. He touches his face. He is stunned. What the fuck?

He bursts. His mind can't keep up with his body. He throws himself on Billy. Steve acts on instinct. He throws another punch to Hargrove's stomach and gets one in the jaw in return.

They aren't holding back. Billy knocks Steve off his feet but Steve is fast. He rolls over and Billy punches a ground. It buys Steve few seconds and he goes hard on Hargrove, kicking him and getting on him. Their punches are strong, breaths heavy and vision blurry. Billy



gets somehow right on his feet, throwing Steve off. Steve's back is colliding painfully with a wall. Billy comes to Steve and grabs hems of his shirt. He tightens his grip. Steve has a deja vu of the morning after he found Hargrove in the woods. He tastes blood on his tongue.

He spits it on Billy.

Billy takes few steps backward, clearly disgusted and Steve attacks again.

After a few minutes, their punches are weaker and their bodies are giving up. Steve leans against the wall and watches how Billy is trying to catch a breath on the floor. Steve's legs are wobbly. Soon enough he is sitting on the cold ground too.

He stares at Billy. Hargrove is not looking at him. His head is hidden between his legs. He pants.

- Happy now? – Steve slurs.

Even to his own ears, he sounds delirious. Billy flinches.

Steve laughs and licks his lips. There is blood on his tongue and teeth. He doesn't mind.

He doesn't give a shit.

He straightens his legs and curses a bit at a sharp pain radiating from the center of his body. He fishes out the cigarettes and lighter from his sweatpants. He lights one up and throws them to Billy.

Billy flinches again. He doesn't spare a look at cigarettes.

That's interesting.

Steve can feel that he's coming back to his old self. The adrenaline from the fight left him and now he is exhausted to the bone. His whole body is aching, but Steve is fine.

He doesn't care.

He wants few hours of a restful nap before the fear hits again.

- Are you coming? – he drags on the last of cigarette, crashes it on the ground and tries to stand up.

His legs aren't steady enough. Steve's mind is not having it. He is determined to get at least to the couch.

Billy is not answering or moving. Steve is fed up with his shit. He leaves him in the basement and climbs upstairs.

Hargrove can take care of himself just fine.

He feels dizzy when he steps in the living room. He doesn't register falling down on the couch or wrapping himself in a blanket. Steve is asleep almost on the spot.

If he wasn't so out of it he would notice a teenage boy standing in the middle of the living room, observing him with a mild interest.

He is tall and lean. His hands are hidden in the depths of his black trousers. His sweatshirt looks like it saw better times. His black hair is long at the top of his head and short on the sides. Calm blue eyes examine Steve. The white scar, running on the right side of his cheek and down on his throat, is his most prominent feature.

The boy is still standing there when a noise makes him break through his haze. It comes from the basement.

The boy doesn't hide when Billy Hargrove walks into the living room and stands beside the couch, watching Steve Harrington's chest rise and fall for a long time.

He just blurs in the air in a matter of seconds.

Steve stirs in his sleep.